



Pinellas Partners in Recycling Meeting Notes for 7/29/2026

Virtual

Overview and Attendance

Kervin St. Aimie, City of Clearwater; Jacobly Washington, City of Clearwater; Melody Yin, City of Clearwater; Keely Kessler, City of Key West; Kyle B. Arrison, City of Pinellas Park; Amanda Ergler, City of Pinellas Park; Colin Bartholomew, City of Safety Harbor; Vicki Fordyce, City of St. Petersburg; Louis J. Neary, City of St. Petersburg; Shelby Lewis, RRS; Tessa Coulter, City of Tampa; Holly Langston, City of Tarpon Springs; Nickolas Gerakios, City of Tarpon Springs; Frank Jr. Kendrick, City of Temple Terrace; Joe Munoz, City of Temple Terrace; Ciara Thanasides, City of Temple Terrace; Veatrice Farrell, Digital Education Foundation; Jennifer L. Ciaravella, Florida Dept. of Environmental Protection; Christopher Perry, Florida Dept. of Environmental Protection; Sommer L Turner, Florida Dept. of Environmental Protection; Tessa Jones, Goodwill Industries-Suncoast, Inc.; Timothy Felder, Goodwill Industries- Suncoast, Inc.; Angela Fama, Hillsborough County; Lisa Leseigneur, Hillsborough County; Rachelle Dobbs, Pasco County; Kelsey Grentzer, Pinellas County Communications; Jasmine Scott, Pinellas County Solid Waste; Catherine Eichner, Pinellas County Solid Waste; Emily LeMay, Pinellas County Solid Waste; Philip Nichols, Pinellas County Solid Waste; Paul S Sacco, Pinellas County Solid Waste; Kiana Sladicki, Pinellas County Solid Waste; Ashley Wyland, Pinellas County Solid Waste; Tyler Ward, Recycling Services of Florida; Doris S Heitzmann, Florida-Friendly Landscaping™ Program Manager; Nancy Cass Backenstoe, Resident; John DiNardi, Solar Sanitation; Lynn St. Vil, St. John's County; Wilfred Holmes, Town of Belleair; Diane Daniel, Vacation Donations; Kylie Diaz, Visit St. Pete Clearwater; and Andrew Mekemson, Waste Pro.

Andrew Mekemson, Waste Pro, recorded the notes.

Call to Order

Ashley Wyland, Pinellas County Solid Waste, called the meeting to order at 9:30 a.m.

Review of May 20, 2026, PPR Meeting Notes

No objections to notes as written.

Introductions

No new members introduced themselves at this meeting.

Presentation

No presentation occurred at this meeting.

Updates

State Updates

- Florida DEP
 - Jennifer Ciaravella
 - 2025 recycling rates are in - [2025 Solid Waste Management Report | Florida Department of Environmental Protection](#)
 - Statewide overall recycling rate (includes renewable energy credits) is 50% - no change from last year
 - Statewide traditional recycling rate (does not include renewable energy credits) is 43% - no change from last year
 - Top three recycling rates: Palm Beach County, Lee County and Collier County
 - Chris Perry
 - [Take Charge Florida | Florida Department of Environmental Protection](#)

Regional Updates

Hillsborough County

- Angela Fama
 - Recycling Guide
 - [Recycling Better Together](#) was released on Earth Week; a total of 155,500 copies were distributed to all Hillsborough science classes and inserted into several *Tampa Bay Times* issues.
 - This year, we added a four-page insert, which included partnering with the City of Tampa on a two-page spread featuring their recycling rules and waste reduction programs.
 - In this issue, we highlighted new services such as the [Where Does It Go? Guide](#) (see page 11), a searchable widget connecting customers with proper disposal options. This web service was developed internally by our Communications & Digital Media Team.
 - Additionally, new recycling mascots – River the raccoon and Binny the recycling bin made their first in-print debut (see page 3)!
 - Since the Recycling Guide's been published, we've received great feedback about the tables/graphics used, its readability and the inclusion of the City of Tampa to help distinguish between recycling programs.



- Recycling Behavior Survey
 - As previously shared at the November 2025 PPR meeting, WM will be Hillsborough County's next recyclables processing partner.
 - Ahead of WM's new Recycling Tampa Bay MRF coming online at the end of 2027, Hillsborough County is developing a recycling education campaign focused on improving the quality of recyclables.
 - As a prelude to developing the campaign's Communication Plan, Hillsborough County internally developed a recycling behavior survey to better understand Hillsborough customers' current knowledge of recycling rules and learn how they want to be communicated with.
 - A total of 645 residents participated:
 - 97% of residents recycle (Solid Waste customers)
 - 3% don't recycle (because they're apartment dwellers/non-Solid Waste customers)
 - Overall, the County's curbside recycling program is well-received by the community:
 - The main motivators to recycle at home are to protect the environment and residents' personal responsibility to the community.
 - Residents want more information on the process of what happens to recycling after collection, which can help support confidence and participation in the program.
 - This information helps shape the campaign as we're developing strategies to increase recycling education to single-family homes by sending recycling information via text message or email and considering how to get our recycling message on recycling bins.
 - Additionally, based on the survey results, we're incorporating messaging and resources for multi-family communities interested in recycling.
- Annual Solid Waste Management Report Results
 - The results from the Florida Department of Environmental Protection's (FDEP) 2025 Solid Waste Management Report were published at the beginning of July. We thank our municipal partners for providing their data, the local commercial recyclers across the county for reporting their



recycling tonnage, and FDEP's ongoing support through the reporting season.

- With this collaboration, Hillsborough, the third most populated county in the state, ranked 8th in the state, achieving a 58% total recycling rate and 51% traditional recycling rate.

City of Tampa

- Tessa Coulter
 - New Recycling Specialist starting at the end of August – fully staffed again!

Pinellas County

- Emily LeMay
 - Municipal recycling workshop on 7/22 with larger municipalities
 - Presentation about the current state of recycling in Pinellas County and open discussion of challenges, successes and opportunities for improvement.
 - We heard that recycling matters to the community because it: reduces waste going to LF, good for environment, paves road to zero waste, aligns with strategic plan objectives, good partnership between cities and county
 - Challenges: rising program costs, contamination, resident confusion about what is accepted, different materials accepted across the various programs
 - Successes: cart inspection programs that allow following up w/ resident directly, cameras on trucks to monitor contamination and guide education, complete annual studies that clearly communicate the recycling program costs
 - Opportunities for collaboration: adopt standardized countywide recycling messaging and educational materials, reevaluate feasibility of county-owned/operated MRF, explore additional technology to capture recyclable materials and end markets for recyclable materials, including glass
- *New* Municipal Resource Portal webpage
 - <https://pinellas.gov/recycling-resources-for-municipalities/>
 - Consolidates County's recycling data, educational tools, and contract guidance
 - Would love to hear from municipalities if there's anything else we can do to support their recycling programs
 - Contact us if your local leadership is considering reducing or eliminating recycling services



- Ashley
 - Charity Free Allowance Program applications are due Monday, August 3
 - Need copies of the Recycle Guide? Email recycle@pinellas.gov to request copies
- Jasmine
 - FY27 Disposal Fee Increase
 - Pending Board approval, Pinellas County Solid Waste's disposal fee for municipal solid waste, commercial waste and yard waste will increase by 8% on Oct. 1 from \$58.86 to \$63.57 per ton.
 - The following additional fee increases will take effect Oct. 1:
 - The out-of-county waste surcharge is applied at \$63.57 per ton in addition to the per-ton rate of \$63.57.
 - The tire fee will increase from \$180.00 to \$210.00 per ton (for loads containing five or more waste tires; reweigh is required).
 - Personal protective equipment (PPE) will increase from \$20.00 to \$22.50 per kit.
 - The [fees](#) for cars, pickup trucks and vans, special handling service, contractor surcharge and Christmas trees remain the same.
 - [2026 Residential Recycling Awareness Survey](#) highlights
 - The survey helps us better understand Pinellas County residents' recycling behaviors, knowledge, and disposal habits over time.
 - **The majority of residents continue to recycle, regardless of whether they live in a single or multi-family home.**
 - Nine in ten single-family residents (90%) participate in curbside recycling.
 - Nearly two-thirds (64%) of multifamily residents said their complex offers recycling, and of those who didn't have service available to them, 68% said they'd recycle if it was offered.
 - "To Protect the Earth" continues to be the most cited reason for why residents choose to recycle.
 - **Residents generally believe in recycling.**
 - New question this year!



- Eight in ten residents (80%) agreed that what they place in their recycling bin will actually be recycled and turned into new things.
- **Rechargeable batteries remain an important educational opportunity.**
 - New question this year!
 - When asked how they get rid of rechargeable batteries, only 53% reported properly taking them to a drop-off.
 - The other half said they “don’t have or don’t use” (which we know must be untrue) or they place them in the trash or recycling bin, highlighting an ongoing need for education
- Municipal Recycling Reimbursement Grant reminder
 - Municipalities, please submit your reimbursement request packets by September 15, 2026.
- Closure of mixed recycling drop-off site at North County Service Center, but HHW still open
 - The mixed recycling drop-off center located at 29582 US Hwy 19 N., Clearwater (just south of Curlew Road) is now permanently closed due to construction of a new North County Service Center for the Tax Collector, Property Appraiser and Clerk of the Circuit Court. To find an alternate drop-off center, view this Google map: [Pinellas County Recycling Drop-Off Sites + Mulch Pickup Sites - Google Maps](#).
 - Household chemical collections will continue and remain open at HHW North during construction of the new North County Service Center. For more information, visit [Pinellas.gov/hhw](https://pinellas.gov/hhw).

Pinellas County Municipal Updates

City of St. Petersburg

- Louis Neary and Vicki Fordyce
 - Upcoming Ribbon Cutting Event – USF St. Pete composter to collect campus food scraps
 - [Greencycle Composter Ribbon Cutting - Events | USF St. Petersburg](#)
 - [Florida Composting Council - Circular Services Site Tour](#)
 - August 5 from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.
 - \$25 per ticket, lunch will be provided



- Behind-the-scenes look at the composting operations
- Grant Opportunity for Cities
 - [2027 Healthy and Sustainable Communities Grant Awards](#)

City of Clearwater

- Kervin St. Aimie
 - Implementing Routeware SmartCity software to help with recycling contamination and collection routes

City of Indian Rocks Beach

- Update given on behalf of IRB resident, Diane Daniel (Vacation Donations)
 - Special meeting at the end of June to talk about the future of curbside recycling in IRB – a lot of residents were at the meeting and spoke up about the desire to keep the program

Community Updates

Visit St. Pete Clearwater

- Kylie Diaz
 - Ocean Race coming to St. Pete/Clearwater in May 2027 - [The Ocean Race announces new U.S. destination for 2027: St. Pete-Clearwater, Florida | Visit St Petersburg Clearwater Florida](#)
 - Still focusing on meaningful travel efforts
 - <https://www.visitstpeteclearwater.com/meaningful-travel>
 - <https://youtu.be/AeLM9Ka44B4?is=vtXWgsV5EWXv4spr>
 - https://youtu.be/8ln8_pufiKs?is=aiveok3s69vz3ELb
 - Living Shorelines webpage focused on County's oyster program
 - [Eat Oysters, Save the Bay | Visit St Petersburg Clearwater Florida](#)

Waste Pro

- Andrew Mekemson
 - Focusing on heat safety for employees, making sure everyone stays hydrated and safe
 - Increase in recycling routes – 35 routes every Wednesday (up four additional routes from last year)



- Waste Management Lamp Tracker
 - https://www.wmlamptracker.com/v2/product_battery.cfm
 - Can buy containers to collect batteries and lamps for proper disposal

Work Group Updates

Contamination – Ashley

- No future meetings scheduled at this time.
- Pinellas County posted a [battery awareness video on social media](#) on 6/17. As of 7/21, the video has 87,395 views, reached 60,435 people, 1,783 interactions, 75 link clicks and 1,403 likes and reactions.
- Working on a postcard to be handed out at the Scalehouse and looking into providing stores that sell batteries with them as well.
- Business Waste Assessment Team is working on a Guide to Managing Batteries brochure for businesses. This will be handed out during inspections and added to the website with the other material guides - [Guide to Recognizing Hazardous Waste - Pinellas County](#)
- Hillsborough County working on Phase 2 of their battery awareness campaign

Open Discussion

- Emily LeMay
 - Is there anything Pinellas County can do to support municipalities' recycling programs?
- Ashley Wyland
 - If you have a vendor or company in mind to present at PPR, or if you would like to present, please contact me directly (awyland@pinellas.gov) or complete the [PPR presenter request form](#)

Announcements

- N/A

Adjournment

- Next Meeting: Wednesday, September 16, at 9:30 a.m. via Teams